

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1-36 (canceled)

37. (new) A content addressable memory (CAM) apparatus comprising:
- an array of CAM cells to store data to be compared with a comparand value;
 - a select circuit to store a plurality of segment-select values, each segment-select value indicating which of a plurality of segments of input data is to source a respective bit of the comparand value; and
 - switch circuitry to output, as the comparand value, one or more bits of each of the plurality of segments of input data indicated by the select circuit to be a source of a bit of the comparand value.
38. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 37 wherein the select circuit comprises:
- a plurality of memory storage circuits to store the plurality of segment-select values; and
 - a plurality of compare circuits to compare the plurality of segment-select values with input segment information to generate a plurality of select signals.
39. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 38 wherein the plurality of compare circuits and the plurality of memory storage circuits form a plurality of CAM cells.
40. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 38 wherein the switch circuitry comprises L rows of programmable switch circuits coupled to receive L input bits of the input data and coupled to receive the select signals from the select circuit.

41. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 40 wherein the L inputs bits are one of N segments of M input bits where M is equal to N multiplied by L.
42. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 37 wherein the switch circuitry comprises a plurality of programmable switch elements, and wherein the CAM apparatus further comprises a program circuit coupled to the switch circuitry to program the plurality of programmable switch elements.
43. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 37 wherein the switch circuitry comprises a cross-bar switch.
44. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 37 further comprising a comparand register coupled between the switch circuitry and the array of CAM cells, the comparand register to store the comparand value output from the switch circuitry.
45. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 44 further comprising a global mask register coupled between the comparand storage register and the array of CAM cells.
46. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 37 wherein at least one bit of the input data has a first bit position in the input data and a second, different bit position in the comparand value.
47. (new) The (CAM) apparatus of claim 37 wherein the array of CAM cells comprises a plurality of CAM array blocks each having a plurality of rows of CAM cells.
48. (new) The CAM device of claim 47 wherein the switch circuitry is coupled to provide the comparand value to each of the plurality of CAM array blocks.
49. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 47 wherein the select circuit and the switch circuitry correspond to a first CAM array block of the plurality of CAM array blocks, and wherein

the CAM apparatus further comprises at least one additional select circuit and at least one additional switch circuitry that correspond to a second CAM array block of the plurality of CAM array blocks.

50. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 37 wherein the array of CAM cells are disposed in rows and columns, with the rows being segmented to form a plurality of columns of row segments, each row segment including a plurality of CAM cells.
51. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 50 wherein the select circuit and the switch circuitry correspond to a first column of the plurality of columns of row segments, and wherein the CAM apparatus further comprises at least one additional select circuit and at least one additional switch circuitry that correspond to a second column of the plurality of columns of row segments.
52. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 50, wherein the number of CAM cells included in each row segment matches a width of the comparand value, and wherein the switch circuitry is coupled to provide the comparand value to each of the plurality of columns of row segments.
53. (new) A content addressable memory (CAM) apparatus comprising:
 - an array of CAM cells to store data to be compared with a comparand value;
 - means for storing a plurality of segment-select values, each segment-select value indicating which of a plurality of segments of input data is to source a respective bit of the comparand value; and
 - means for outputting, as the comparand value, one or more bits of each of the plurality of segments of input data indicated by the select circuit to be a source of a bit of the

comparand value.

54. (new) The CAM apparatus of claim 53, wherein the means for outputting comprises a cross-bar switch.

55. (new) A method of operation within a content addressable memory device, the method comprising:

storing a plurality of segment-select values, each segment-select value indicating which of a plurality of segments of input data is to source a respective bit of a comparand value;

outputting, as a comparand value, one or more bits of each of the plurality of segments of input data indicated by the segment-select values to be a source of a bit of the comparand value; and

comparing the comparand value to contents of an array of CAM cells.

56. (new) A method comprising:

receiving a plurality of segments of input data in a content addressable memory (CAM) apparatus having an array of CAM cells;

storing a plurality of segment-select values within the CAM apparatus, each segment-select value indicating which of the plurality of segments of input data is to source a respective bit of the comparand value; and

selectively enabling, in response to the plurality of segment-select values, programmed switch circuitry to filter at least one bit of the input data to generate at least one comparand bit for the array of CAM cells.

57. (new) The method of claim 56 wherein selectively enabling programmed switch circuitry

to filter at least one bit of the input data comprises selectively enabling at least one programmed switch circuit to couple one bit of the input data to at least one bit position of a comparand storage element.

58. (new) The method of claim 56 further comprising comparing the comparand bit with data stored in the array of CAM cells.